



MLA Parenthetical Documentation



In MLA style, in-text citations, called parenthetical citations, are used to document any external sources used within a document (unless the material cited is considered general knowledge). The parenthetical citations direct readers to the full bibliographic citations listed in the Works Cited, located at the end of the document.

Use of Authors' Names

Always mention the author's name—either in the text itself or in the parenthetical citation—unless no author is provided.

If the author's name is mentioned in the text

If the author's name is used in the text introducing the source material, then cite the page number(s) in parentheses:

Branscomb argues that "it's a good idea to lurk (i.e., read all the messages without contributing anything) for a few weeks, to ensure that you don't break any of the rules of netiquette" (7) when joining a listserv.

If the author's name is not mentioned in the text

If the author's name is not used in the sentence introducing the source material, then include the author's last name in the parenthetical citation before the page number(s). Note that no comma appears between the author's name and the page number(s).

The modern world requires both the ability to concentrate on one thing and the ability to attend to more than one thing at a time: "Ideally, each individual would cultivate a repertoire of styles of attention, appropriate to different situations, and would learn how to embed activities and types of attention one within another" (Bateson 97).

If there are two or three authors

If a source has two or three authors, place all of the authors' last names in the text or in the parenthetical citation:

A team can be defined as "a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable" (Katzenbach and Smith 45).

If no author is identified

If a source does not include an author's name, substitute for the author's name the title or an abbreviated title in the text or parenthetical citation. Underline the title if the source is a book. If the source is an article, use quotation marks:

The use of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems has grown substantially over the past five years as companies attempt to adapt to customer needs and to improve their profitability (“Making CRM Work”).

Placement of Citations

- Place a citation as close to the quoted or paraphrased material as possible without disrupting the sentence.
- When material from one source and the same page numbers is used throughout a paragraph, use one citation at the end of the paragraph rather than a citation at the end of each sentence.
- Parenthetical citations usually appear after the final quotation mark and before the period. An exception occurs, however, in quotes of four or more lines since these quotes are presented as block quotes: that is, they are indented and use no quotation marks. In such cases, the parenthetical citation goes after the period, as the following example shows:

Bolles argues that the most effective job hunting method is what he calls the creative job hunting approach:

figuring out your best skills, and favorite knowledges, and then researching any employer that interests you, before approaching that organization and arranging, through your contacts, to see the person there who has the power to hire you for the position you are interested in. This method, faithfully followed, leads to a job for 86 out of every 100 job-hunters who try it. (57)

Treatment of Electronic and Other Sources

In-text citations for electronic sources are treated in most respects as print texts are. The greatest difference with electronic texts do not have page numbers.

If there is no page number

Often this is the case with web pages – use the abbreviation **n.p.** (no page).

If the source is a newspaper, magazine, encyclopedia, or web page

without an author

Place a shortened form of the title in the parentheses.

Some critics say Pop Art grew out of Dadaism (“Recent Trends” 34).

These guidelines are taken from two books by Joseph Gibaldi: *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (Sixth Edition, New York: Modern Language Association, 2003) and the *MLA Style Guide to Scholarly Publishing* (Second Edition, New York: Modern Language Association, 1998).
